SSRE Conference 2019 – Call for papers

Educational processes in diverse contexts

Educational processes involve interacting with other stakeholders and are embedded in social contexts (e.g. nurseries, schools, education, family, peer groups, companies, etc.). Knowledge and skills are not abstract but are embedded in social contexts; they are learned by interacting with other people and then applied in new social contexts. This way of thinking has established itself not just in systems theory and constructivism but also in many schooling theories and (specialist) didactic models. Individual and social characteristics, embedded in institutions and a specific social environment, form complex constellations which favour or hinder individual educational processes.

Variety and diversity have received a great deal of attention in educational science as society has progressed. Numerous categories such as social and cultural origins, gender, age, performance, language or disabilities are all part of how we perceive variety and diversity. Categories like these matter because they reflect the conditions of education and learning and thus guide educational processes. They often arise in combination, i.e. are closely interlinked, forming complex constellations and structures. Contexts vary when differences between people are taken into account. The term diversity is often associated with the norm that dictates that different people should have the same rights and opportunities (equal opportunities) despite their differences.

Variety and diversity are the result of social change and how it is perceived, as well as decisions on how to structure education. For example, cultural and linguistic diversity has increased at many educational institutions in Switzerland with the rise of migration. Depending on the subject, this poses specific challenges with regard to teaching and the curriculum. With the political decision to integrate children with special needs into regular classes or the choice to structure classes around mixed age groups, the number of specific learning needs is expanding, requiring different teaching solutions and other institutional measures. However, variety and diversity can also be understood as a perspective on education. From one perspective, the emphasis could be placed on the similarities between learners in a group, allowing for a uniform interpretation of educational contexts. Alternatively, individuals in their uniqueness could be seen as part of a learning group, making educational contexts fundamentally diverse (diversity as the norm). If educational processes are interpreted as an individual's performance, every learning group is diverse. People's individual requirements and learning aims are therefore a fundamental part of devising learning arrangements. If we take diversity as the norm then educational theory and (specialist) didactic approaches need to be developed in which the individual differences between learners are not seen as a problem or hindrance but as a requirement for successful learning.

Variety and diversity have been defined in different ways throughout the history of education. Pestalozzi tried to standardise school classes using numerous methodological approaches and to reduce individual differences between the children in a class. In German reformed education, the individuality of each child's learning became a stronger focus. With the constructivism movement especially, the idea of interpreting knowledge acquisition as an individual achievement has recently become popular. Diversity was positively re-evaluated as a source of inspiration for designing teaching and learning processes. On the basis of research into schooling and teaching, John Hattie emphasised that learning is most effective when teaching balances structured curriculums with adjustments to individual needs. This means that specific educational classifications must be coordinated with individual learning conditions.

This has implications at education governance and teaching level for teachers and school pupils of all stages. Most classes at primary schools are more diverse in terms of performance and social and cultural background than at secondary education levels I and II. Studies show that annual performance increases at primary level are not smaller but greater than during secondary education level I. And greater diversity in learning contexts places stringent demands on teachers, for example because it makes teaching far more complex. This can lead to excessive stress and

strain when teaching staff with a standardised approach are faced with diverse contexts. Furthermore, due to the lack of research in this area, it is unclear what impact the social, cultural and performance-related diversity of school classes has on generic skills (self-regulation, social skills, dealing with new situations, etc.). It is also unclear whether diversity is a hindrance to the principle of equal opportunities or whether it is in fact a prerequisite for this.

Key issues relating to educational processes in diverse contexts will be discussed at the 2019 annual congress, with input from educational methodology and the educational sciences as well as from other areas of research in the social and cultural sciences.

1 Thematic fields

Taking this brief outline as a starting point, main talks, symposiums and other events will be organised around three clusters of topics. The talks and symposiums may look at one of these topics individually or combine multiple areas.

1.1 Definition of variety and diversity

The congress is looking for submissions on the question of how variety, diversity and intersectionality are to be understood in educational contexts and what repercussions this has for teaching (e.g. subject teaching, class management, materials), individual schools and the education system as a whole. How has our assessment of variety and diversity changed over time? What differences are there depending on the age of the learner? How are they defined in non-school educational institutions? Where do diverse educational contexts arise? What concepts are already in place for creating a correlation between diversity and education? What social challenges are addressed by concepts of dealing with diversity, e.g. integration/separation, inclusion, school levels vs comprehensive school/middle school, classes of mixed ages, etc?

1.2 Subject-specific learning

The congress is seeking input on the question of how to tackle the challenge of diversity in specialist learning contexts. Since diversity can be seen as a part of subject-specific learning, educational scientists are being challenged among other things to demonstrate support methods when dealing with different levels of (previous) knowledge and interests in school pupils and, at the same time, to show how these can also be implemented in regular teaching. They can also ask how pupils' subject-specific and individual diversity relate to devising mandatory educational standards which have to be achieved by *all* young people. This process also involves asking how mandatory skill descriptions on the curriculum are to be harmonised with individual subject-specific learning and educational processes.

1.3 Different concepts of variety and diversity and their impact

The concept of variety and diversity in education has numerous repercussions not only for education governance, school and teaching but also for non-school educational institutions. What opportunities and obstacles do diverse educational contexts pose for school leadership teams, teachers, pupils and parents? What impact do diverse educational contexts have on pupils at different levels (e.g. as regards performance, sense of self, behaviour, etc.)? What would an example of a differentiated teaching method look like? What didactic and organisational strategies are expedient? How should we define learning success under the premise of variety and diversity? How can equal opportunities be achieved?

1.4   Non-thematic submissions

As usual, in addition to thematic symposiums, individual talks and posters on thematic clusters 1 to 3, the congress also welcomes suggestions for submissions which do not deal with the event's main theme. Please indicate if your submission falls into this category (4, non-thematic submissions). In this case, the call for papers functions in the same way.

2   Languages

Submissions can be in German, French, Italian or English. The presentations must be given in the same language as the submission.

3   Possible formats and guidelines for submission

Proposals may be submitted in four different formats:

3.1   Open symposiums

A public symposium is organised for each of the three topics.

3.2   Symposiums

A symposium lasts 90 minutes and includes no more than three presentations and time for discussion. Input may not all come from the same research project. Symposiums in multiple languages are especially welcome. A chair must be nominated for each symposium.

3.3   Round tables

Round table discussions are freer than symposiums in terms of how they are organised. They last 90 minutes. Generally speaking, more people are actively involved in round tables than in symposiums (e.g. podium-based), meaning individuals speak for less time each. The participants in the round table must come from at least three different organisations or universities. The session must focus on discussion (including with the audience) of a defined topic. A chair must be nominated for each round table.

3.4   Individual papers

Individual paper presentations last 30 minutes in all, at least ten of which must be allocated for discussion. The organising committee will combine similar topics into symposiums and nominate a chair for each one.

3.5   Posters

Posters must be printed in A0 format. The authors will have the chance to present their poster to the audience within an allocated time slot.

4   Guidelines for submissions

Participants may only present at one event type (either a symposium, round table, paper or poster), unless they are performing additional roles (e.g. chair or participant in a discussion). For each symposium contribution, individual paper or poster, submission of an abstract of 500 words maximum (750 for round tables) is required. For symposiums, an additional abstract of no longer than 250 words for the whole symposium must also be submitted. Each submission must include details of the participants, theoretical framework, key questions and central arguments. In the case of empirical work, it must also include a description of the research methods used and initial results found. Include three to five key words.

Entries can be submitted from 1 November 2018.

5   Deadline for submissions

Entries can be submitted by 15 January 2019.

6   Review process

All of the submissions will be evaluated by two experts. The evaluation criteria are as follows and have equal weighting: relevance/currency/originality, theoretical basis, method/access, results/hypotheses, coherence of argument. The organising committee reserves the right to suggest an alternative format for your submission as required. If your symposium is rejected, some submissions may still be accepted as individual papers.

Feedback on the review results will be provided by late March 2019.